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The System.

Some of the newspapers have spoken of JOHN A. MCCALL'S death as "one of the tragedies of the system."

What system? Why, the system at Albany by which most corporations doing business in the State of New York have been blackmailed by legislators, Republicans as well as Democrats, for years.

ODELL'S connivance with the Ambler bill which was to repeal the charter of the Mercantile Trust Company was part of the system.

ODELL profited by that chapter of the system. ODELL, who "O. K.'d" and "N. G.'d" all bills at Albany for so many years, is a prince of the system.

While HAMILTON remains abroad the representatives of the system still on duty at Albany can sleep at night.

Duties of a United States Senator.

In the Senate on February 20 the Pure Food bill, which passed that body on the following day, was up for consideration and debate. Section after section was discussed, analyzed, construed, with the painstaking attention to detail, the careful consideration of its probable and possible effects, that mark the work of conscientious lawmakers, but receive slight recognition from part of the public. There was nothing sensational, nothing to interest or attract the attention of the galleries. A number of earnest men, intent on their routine duties, were performing their routine duties.

Senator SPOONER of Wisconsin asked for information as to the meaning of the clause, "Goods intended for export shall not be deemed misbranded or adulterated when prepared and packed in accordance with the specifications of the foreign purchaser." After some inquiries and answers, he said:

"Then it really leaves the foreign user of it entirely subject to the greed of the merchant who orders it for their use. I should like to have it made clearer, if it can be made clearer, that article that is shipped shall not be a prohibited article in our own country."

Senator HAYBURN explained that the provision Senator SPOONER questioned had been reported by the committee, that no Senator had offered an amendment to change it, and that in the previous Congresses at which the bill was under consideration no effort had been made to eliminate it. Then Mr. SPOONER gave this casual explanation of his conception of the duties of his office:

"I have heard that observation before. I am not on that committee. I sit here, and when bills come up and are presented to the Senate, I look them over as thoroughly as I can. No Senator can read all the bills upon which this body acts, not even all the important bills. If I see something as I read it, which I think ought to be changed, or which I think is a misconstruction, I conceive of it and have conceived it to be my duty to call the attention of the Senate to it in the expectation that if there be force in the objection I make the committee which prepared the bill and whose duty it is to have become perfectly familiar with the subject would prepare a proper amendment, if I cannot at the moment."

"Last year I performed this same function, which is an ungracious one, as to the Pure Food bill, in connection with the Senator from Connecticut, Mr. Tamm. I am greatly misled from this (Mr. Tamm). I wish whose opinion is worth consideration could suppose for one moment that either of us could be seeking merely to obstruct good legislation. And I recollect that almost every amendment suggested by the Senator from Connecticut, and nearly every one to which I called the attention of Senators having the bill in charge, were acquiesced in, and the bill was amended accordingly. The bill was very much improved, and the discussion last year, which was so protracted, was a thing that I think the Senator from Idaho will admit, enabled the committee to improve very much this bill over the bill of last year."

An "ungracious duty" Mr. SPOONER denominates the necessary function of watching with care the provisions of the measures on which the Senate must act. Its performance usually earns for those, who do it the name of "obstructionists," or "tools of the corporations," from superficial observers and those whose vocation it is to prove the faithlessness and treachery to the public of its chosen representatives.

Mr. SPOONER "obstructed" the Pure Food bill perhaps as much as half an hour by insisting on a clear statement of the purposes of the section he called to his colleagues' attention. He will probably be rebuked properly for it. But do his critics hold as high and as reasonable a view of the duties of a member of the United States Senate as those of the Hon. JOHN COIT SPOONER of Wisconsin?

Enlarging Our Buildings.

There is nothing surprising in the fact that another New York hotel is to be made twice its present size. This process has become common. Four other houses have recently been subjected to the same change. When a trial of two or three years has shown that a hotel is going to succeed the process of enlargement inevitably follows.

It is, of course, useless to find fault with such a result. Doubtless there is no loss of comfort from this increase in size, and the owners of the hotels invariably profit by the change; but the damage to the architectural beauty of these buildings, and thus to the appearance of the city, is recognizable in every similar alteration that has been made. No structure can be so built as to preserve its original symmetry of proportions after it has been made twice as large as it was intended to be. Even when a building is planned with allowance for such variations in the future, it is inferior

architecturally to one that is put up to remain the same.

In the case of most of the buildings that are thus altered there was no original intention of enlarging them. Only when they have fulfilled successfully the purpose for which they were built are the changes made. These depend on several conditions. They are necessarily governed, in the first place, by the amount of adjacent property available. The original style of architecture has its influence in determining what the new structure shall be.

These and other considerations must be regarded when it comes to enlarging a building. It is only regrettable that they could not be known when it is first put up. Then it could stand as its designers intended it to be. Commercial architecture is one of the artistic glories of the age, and it is unfortunate that it cannot be unhampered. There is no limit to our business enterprise in other cases, and caution shows itself thus disadvantageously only in experimenting with the size of hotels and other large buildings.

American Public Life.

In another column of THE SUN is printed a short extract from an article on the "Moral Upheaval in America," contributed to the *Nineteenth Century* by Admiral Sir CYPRIAN A. G. BRIDGE, G. C. B. At a time when many agencies are employed, in ignorance, with sinister motive, to destroy public confidence in the men and institutions of our Government, such sane and reasonable words as his have a high value.

In spite of the clamor raised by uninformed or interested persons, competent and honest students of American public life will agree with the conclusions reached by Admiral BRIDGE. Our Government, in all its departments, is conducted on a high plane by men inspired by high ideals. Its institutions and processes have proved remarkably elastic and adaptable as new conditions required new applications of its powers. It is a Government of which every patriot has cause to be proud.

It is distinctly refreshing to have the monotonous campaign of abuse now directed against the Government varied by the injection therein of a sensible and intelligent man's opinions.

Electoral Reform in Austria.

According to a telegram from Vienna, five bills were submitted on Friday to the lower chamber of the Austrian or Cisleithan Reichsrath, embodying a scheme for universal suffrage and for a redistribution of electoral districts. This is the measure to which the Emperor FRANCIS JOSEPH reluctantly assented, on the ground that it would afford a precedent for similar electoral reforms in Hungary, the Germans having hitherto possessed the same unfair preponderance in the Reichsrath which the Magyars have had in the lower house of the Diet at Budapest. We are told that the outcome of the proposed changes, which were, of course, denounced by many Germans, but applauded by majority of the Deputies, will be to give Germans 205 representatives; the Czechs and other Slavs, 230; the Italians 16 and the Rumanians 4. The total number of Deputies, which twice before has been increased since 1868, is now, it will be noticed, to be expanded from 425, the aggregate fixed in 1868, to 455.

The details of these bills will be awaited with interest, for under them, according to the cable summary, the Germans will still have more votes than they deserve in the popular branch of the Reichsrath. By the census of 1890, the latest whose figures we have before us, there were but 8,461,000 Germans out of nearly 24,000,000. The Czechs and Poles alone numbered about 9,200,000, and the other Slavs—namely, Rumanians, Slovians, Croats and Serbs—upward of 4,000,000. Of Italians there were 875,000, of Rumanians 266,000 and of Tyrolese and others 430,000. These figures indicate that the Germans ought not to have more than a third of the Deputies in the lower house, instead of 205 against 250. The larger representation which they have hitherto enjoyed has been due to an intricate electoral system, based on the mediæval system of Estates.

Originally, when the Cisleithan Constitution was promulgated in 1867, the members of the Chamber of Deputies were chosen by the provincial Diets, and therefore corresponded to United States Senators. In 1873, however, the provincial Diets were deprived of all participation in the matter, and the election of Deputies was placed entirely in the hands of the provincial voters. Under the existing system the voters are distributed in five different classes—namely, the great landowners, the cities, the chambers of commerce, the rural communes and a new general class created in 1896. Except in the case of the cities and the chambers of commerce, which are combined in eight of the smaller provinces, the different classes never vote together for the election of a Deputy. In the rural communes, but not elsewhere, the election is indirect, being carried on by means of secondary electors, one of whom is chosen for every five hundred inhabitants. The seats, at present numbering 425, are so partitioned among the five classes that 85 Deputies are elected by the great landowners, 118 by the cities, 21 by the chambers of commerce, 129 by the rural communes and 72 by the so-called general class.

The conditions of the franchise differ materially in the various classes. In the general class the franchise is enjoyed by substantially all men not in domestic service. In the cities and rural villages it is given to all municipal voters who pay about two dollars annually in taxes. In the class of great landowners the property qualification is the payment of a tax ranging in different provinces from about twenty to one hundred dollars a year, and everywhere, except in three provinces, assessed on land held by a noble or feudal tenure. It is worth noting that in this class women can vote, and so can corporations acting through their legal representatives. We add that an absolute majority is required for election in all the classes, as is the case in the French Republic, though there

universal suffrage obtains; if this majority is not obtained, a second ballot is taken, which is confined to the two candidates highest on the first poll.

As the Slavs will have a majority in the Chamber of Deputies if the proposed electoral reforms are carried out, we shall have heard the last of the attempt to Germanize the Cisleithan kingdom by making the use of the German language compulsory for all of its inhabitants. That attempt was long ago given up in Bohemia and Moravia, where the Czechs are concentrated, and also in Galicia, where the Poles are massed; but only about ten years ago a Government was beaten by the German Deputies because it proposed to teach Slovenian in grammar schools in Styria. The day is probably not distant when all that is left of the Germanizing process will be the retention of German words of command in the Cisleithan army. The disintegration of the Austrian monarchy into its racial components will unquestionably be accelerated by the new electoral system.

Expert Opinions of the Mortgage Tax.

Eight months ago the Mortgage Tax law went into effect. What has been the result of its operation? Let the first witness speak. He is R. S. DONALDSON of Buffalo, secretary of the Erie County Savings Bank, and he testifies that:

"Since July 1, 1906, our bank has taken forty-one new mortgages; if business were in its normal condition we ought to have put out that number in one month. The total amount of these mortgages is \$614,000, and four of this number amount in themselves to \$231,000. Since July 1, 1906, our bank has been obliged to add one-half of 1 per cent, increase to the rate of interest on mortgage loans. I think you must admit that up to this time this bill has not produced the revenue expected."

Next comes ex-Judge WATSON T. DONNORS of Utica, who relates this piece of history:

"On July 4, when the law took effect, the Savings Bank of Utica, the Utica Trust and Deposit Company and the Citizens' Trust Company of this city immediately advanced their rates of interest one-half of 1 per cent, and, if I am correctly informed by those conducting these institutions, there has not been a loan made which prior to July 1, 1906, would not have been made at a rate of interest at least one-half of 1 per cent, lower than the rate exacted."

From Rochester JOHN S. BROOK contributes this interesting information:

"Since the Mortgage Tax law went into effect I have personally made at least twenty real estate mortgages on which the rate of interest was 5 1/2 per cent. Had it not been for the Mortgage Tax law the rate of interest on all of these loans would, I am certain, have been 5 per cent. In this country many real estate mortgages are being recorded with the rate of interest 5 1/2 per cent., but until the Mortgage Tax law went into effect that was seldom the rate of interest."

This is the experience of the Oneida County Savings Bank, as told by JOHN R. EDWARDS, its president:

"Prior to July 1, 1906, we made all loans from \$500 to \$5,000 at 5 per cent., but since have made all loans at 5 1/2 per cent., feeling obliged to do so in order that our earnings should be sufficient to continue to pay 3 1/2 per cent. to our depositors and have a little surplus for protection, having only accumulated about \$20,000 of surplus in the past ten years on nearly \$700,000 deposits, so it cannot be charged that we are piling up large surpluses with the rate of interest charged. The borrower with us is a person owning a farm or building or buying a moderate priced house, and as long as there is any kind of tax on mortgages the borrower will be obliged to pay it in interest, or some other way."

Now for a word from Herkimer, through the lips of W. C. PRESCOTT:

"The current rate of interest on mortgage loans at this place has been 5 per cent. for some time, but I have not drawn any mortgages since July 1, 1906, for a less rate of interest than 5 1/2 per cent. In nearly every case the borrower has to pay the increased rate of 1/2 per cent."

Let the borrowers' side be told by Bishop COLTON of Buffalo, who says:

"In regard to the matter of the tax on mortgages I consider the tax very burdensome and shall be glad if the law be repealed. Our struggling congregations must needs raise mortgages on their churches to help them establish them, and they have all they can do to meet the interest. With this half per cent. increase the burden heretofore so heavy becomes unbearable. Everywhere I go through the diocese, which covers a sixth part of this State, I find the dissatisfaction of pastors and people with this increase of the tax and the hope are expressed for its repeal."

Clothes Philosophy of John Burns.

To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN.—In a cable despatch to your paper of the day I have noted the news that Mr. John Burns, M. P., for London, dresses at Whitehall when he has to do court cases, and disappoints his constituents, who want to see him at "one in the knee breeches and silk stockings."

My mind the news shocked me. Down in West street, eleven years ago, when John Burns from a Cornhill pier upon an admiring populace, and he was dressed in the same way, and he was long-haired, and it gave me great pleasure," said he, "to be greeted in the old way."

Later, at the old Colonnade Hotel, Mr. Burns said: "I am a bit of a humorist, and I have had my day, and the time has come when fashion and custom should have their say. (Cheers.) I did not like to be in the country, within the short space of ten years, we could secure the social and political changes that organized labor, by the most common means, has brought about. What I would like to see is the possibility of the future." "Fustian and corduroy," my masters! B. T. NEW YORK, Feb. 26.

Decrease in Birth Rate of Scottish Families.

Edinburgh correspondence *Toronto Telegraph*. According to the reports to the Registrar General of Scotland the average Scottish family now includes only four children, as against four and one-half a generation ago. And what is perhaps even more remarkable is the fact that this loss is observed among the country folk, and not among the dwellers in the towns. Two generations back the average family was still larger.

The decrease in the birth rate is even more remarkable when it is considered in connection with the statistics upon the subject of marriage. It appears that 238,604 marriages have been recorded during the last decade, and of these nearly 275,000 are the marriages of the decade previous. From all of this the Registrar General concludes that the average number of births per marriage is a much decreased figure, and that there is a real falling off in the fertility of marriage.

Padanung Rubbernecks.

From the *Madras Mail*. Among the Padanungs from the Karenni and Shan States the swan neck is esteemed so great a mark of distinction that it is not infrequently taken to acquire it. As early as possible in the life of the infant breast is rodded about a third of an inch in diameter and coiled around the neck and is added to periodically so as to keep the neck in a constant state of tension. The longer the neck is kept in this state the more is the Padanung carried from twenty to twenty-five coils.

In the *Century Magazine* for March begins an illustrated description of Sloly, by the late William Sharp. Mr. Sloly is a native of the north of Scotland. The Queen of Rumania defends the expulsion of the Jews. Mr. J. B. Bishop gives reminiscences of the late President Lincoln. There are four short stories, and the serial by Mrs. Humphry Ward and Dr. S. Weir Mitchell are advanced. Among the contributors are Mrs. Maule and Miss Edith M. Thomas.

After all, there is healing in this. The child is older than his father. MERLIN must have been a real character. And

everybody over twelve months is a dullard and on the wane.

With the progress of the suns will not authority go with wisdom? The wordings are the quickest, the least degenerate. Theirs be the sceptre and authority.

Dr. MINOT says that the lower orders of animal life never die save by accident. Curiously enough, among the lower orders of human life, the savage and primitive folk, it is or was believed that nobody died save by the design and witchcraft of an enemy.

The faithful have responded so nobly to the Sultan of Turkey's appeal for funds to push forward the Hedjaz railroad that the work is progressing much more rapidly than was expected. Trains are now running from Damascus down into the northern sandy desert of Arabia, a distance of 300 miles from Damascus and the earthworks are completed as far as Medina Salih, 590 miles from Damascus, and within 200 miles of Medina, where the tomb of the prophet is venerated by many thousands of pilgrims. Beyond Medina the route will follow the old pilgrim road to Mecca and the completed line will be about 1,000 miles in length.

It was along the old pilgrim route that explorers gained most of our knowledge of Arabia until a comparatively recent day. The ostensible purpose of building this road is to do away with the terrible hardships of the Mecca pilgrimages along at least one of the most desolate of the highways to the holy city, but incidentally the Sultan will doubtless find it a great convenience to be able to place his Government in closer communication with far southern regions in Arabia. Some of his Arabian subjects give him a little trouble now and then and he has long wished that it was easier to admonish them.

AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE.

Gratifying Conclusions Reached by a British Observer.

Admiral Sir Cyprian A. G. Bridge in the *Nineteenth Century*. The opinion, once widely held in England and adulously inculcated by a host of American writers, that in the United States decent people will have nothing to do with politics, if ever it was true, is now as much out of date as would be the opinion that acrobats can be cured by the royal touch. Whether it be the cure or the effect of the war waged against "Boss" Tammany, it is a fact that the proportion of men of refinement and position entering political life in the United States is as great as it is in any other country. Moreover, it tends to increase. Bosses still exist, and they are not without influence, but in order that they may do their duty to their country, engage in politics to tolerate them, for a time at least, in the same way that many English gentlemen of unblemished reputation have been obliged to do with politicians, people will have nothing to do with politics, if ever it was true, is now as much out of date as would be the opinion that acrobats can be cured by the royal touch. Whether it be the cure or the effect of the war waged against "Boss" Tammany, it is a fact that the proportion of men of refinement and position entering political life in the United States is as great as it is in any other country. Moreover, it tends to increase. 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